

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 L-02 SY-04 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 RSC-01 FBIE-00 SS-15 /040 W

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R 021355Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6806

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, MA (REPPAS, GEORGE)

SUBJECT: W/W GEORGE REPPAS

REF: TANANARIVE 1234

SUMMARY: AFTER BEING DEPRIVED OF FOOD, WATER, AND COOKING UTENSILS, REPPAS ATTEMPTED TO ESCAPE FROM PRISON BY SIMPLY WALKING PAST GATE GUARDS TO SEEK ASYLUM AT EMBASSY. THIS ATTEMPT FAILED. NO PUNITIVE ACTION PLANNED BY PRISON AUTHORITIES. THERE STILL HAS NOT BEEN ANY RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR'S APPROACH TO HEAD OF GOVT. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBASSY RECEIVED NOTE FROM REPPAS DECEMBER 30 STATING THAT HE HAD BEEN DEPRIVED OF FOOD AND WATER FOR THIRTEEN HOURS ON DEC 26. ACCORDING TO REPPAS "GARDIEN CHEF" CONFISCATED HIS FOOD AND HAD HIM LOCKED UP FOR NO REASON. REPPAS SAID THAT "GARDIEN CHEF" WAS DRUNK AT TIME. WHEN HE WAS RELEASED FROM CELL DECEMBER 27 ON SECOND DAY WITHOUT FOOD REPPAS SIMPLY WALKED OUT OF PRISON PAST STARTLED GUARDS TO SEEK ASYLUM AT EMBASSY BUT HE WAS APPREHENDED ONLY ABOUT ONE HUNDRED YARDS FROM PRISON GATES. OFFICIAL FROM PENITENTIARY SERVICE ARRIVED SEVERAL HOURS LATER TO INVESTIGATE INCIDENT, AND SUBSEQUENTLY REPPAS CALLED BACK INTO OFFICE OF "GARDIEN CHEF" AND TOLD HIM HE WOULD NOT BE CHARGED WITH ESCAPE ATTEMPT AND THAT NO FURTHER PUNISHMENT WOULD BE GIVEN.

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2. EMBASSY HAD ORIGINALLY THOUGHT THAT INCIDENT SHOULD BE

BROUGHT TO ATTENTION OF MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, BUT SINCE PRIOR MEETINGS WITH MINJUS OFFICIALS HAD NOT PRECLUDED RECURRENCE (REFTEL), EMBASSY DECIDED TO RAISE MATTER WITH MOFA. AFTERNOON DEC 30 CONS OFF CALLED ON DIRECTOR OF STUDIES AT FONMIN PAUL RAKOTONDRAMASY WHO PREVIOUSLY HAD BEEN HELPFUL ON TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF REPPAS CASE. RAKOTONDRAMASY EXPRESSED HIS DISMAY AT WHAT HAD HAPPENED AND SAID THAT HE WOULD WRITE MEMCON. HE ALSO SUGGESTED THAT EMBASSY SUBMIT AIDE MEMOIRE TO HIM REPORTING SIMPLY WHAT REPPAS HAD SAID AND PERHAPS THIS WOULD HAVE SOME EFFECT.

3. CONSULAR OFFICER ASKED RAKOTONDRAMASY WHAT HE THOUGHT GOMR REACTION TO AMBASSADOR'S APPROACH TO HEAD OF GOVT WOULD EVENTUALLY BE AND WHY THERE HAD BEEN DELAY IN RESPONDING. RAKOTONDRAMASY SAID THAT HE WAS NOT AWARE THAT ANY SUCH APPROACH HAD TAKEN PLACE, AND DID NOT THINK THAT ANYONE ELSE IN FONMIN WAS EITHER. HE POINTED OUT THAT NORMALLY AMNESTY COULD BE CONSIDERED AFTER HALF SENTENCE WAS SERVED, BUT IN THIS CASE HE WAS NOT SURE THAT WOULD BE DONE. RAKOTONDRAMASY SUGGESTED THAT EMBASSY CONTACT HENRI RAZAFINDRATOVO, DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR TO HEAD OF GOVERNMENT, WHO HE FELT WOULD BE IN BEST POSITION TO EXPLAIN DELAY IN RESPONSE.

4. CONSULAR OFFICER VISITED REPPAS MORNING DEC 31. PRISONER REPEATED DETAILS OF INCIDENT DESCRIBED IN LETTER, ADDING THAT HE HAD BEEN BEATEN BY GUARDS UPON RETURNING. (REPPAS SHOWED SIGNS OF HAVING BEEN BEATEN.) REPPAS ALSO COMPLAINED THAT HE WAS HAVING TROUBLE PREPARING MEALS SINCE HOT PLATE AND COOKING UTENSILS TAKEN AWAY. REPPAS EXPRESSED HIS THANKS TO AMB MENDENHALL FOR HAVING EXPLAINED HIS SITUATION TO FAMILY, FOR MAKING IT CLEAR TO THEM HOPES FOR HIS EARLY RELEASE NIL. REPPAS MENTIONED THAT "GARDIEN CHEF" WANTED TO SEE CONSOFF AFTER MEETING.

5. CONSOFF MET BRIEFLY WITH "GARDIEN CHEF" AFTER VISITING PRISONER. CONSOFF MADE NO MENTION OF INCIDENT OF DEC 26. "GARDIEN CHEF" ASKED IF EMBASSY COULD NOW SUPPLY REPPAS WITH ALL MEALS. HE SAID THAT REPPAS' HOT PLATE WAS USING TOO MUCH CURRENT AND POSED FIRE HAZARD IN PRISON. CONSOFF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RESPONDED THAT THIS WAS NOT POSSIBLE AND ASKED WHY REPPAS COULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE COOKING ON WOOD FIRE. "GUARDIEN CHEF" AGREED TO RETURN COOKING UTENSILS TO REPPAS IN THAT HE HAS NO FAMILY HERE TO FEED HIM, BUT HOT PLATE WOULD REMAIN IN HIS CUSTODY.

6. EMBASSY COMMENT: AIDE MEMOIRE BEING PREPARED PER RAKOTONDRAMASY'S REQUEST. CON OFF WILL CALL ON REPPAS'

LAWYER LEBEL JAN 3 TO DISCUSS SUPREME COURT APPEAL AND  
CHARGE WILL SEE DIPLOMATIC COUNSELOR SAME DAY TO TRY AGAIN  
TO ELICIT RESPONSE ON AMBASSADOR'S APPROACH TO HEAD OF  
GOVT.

7. CONCERNING ASYLUM AT EMBASSY, CON OFF TOLD REPPAS SOME  
MONTHS AGO THAT ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN ASYLUM WOULD PROBABLY  
RESULT IN HIS BEING TURNED OVER TO GOMR ONCE AGAIN ALTHROUGH  
EMBASSY WOULD HAVE TO FIRST CONSULT WITH DEPARTMENT. END COMMENT.  
ELFERS

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